

# THE WHITE FLINT COMMUNITY COALITION

*Representing the wishes of the people of the White Flint area*

October 20, 2009  
4714 Argyle Ave  
Garrett Park, Md. 20896

The Honorable Phil M. Andrews, President  
Montgomery County Council  
100 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville, MD. 20850

Re: White Flint Sector Plan

I'm speaking tonight on behalf of the White Flint Community Coalition, a group representing eight communities, 3,200 households, and 8,500 residents in and around White Flint. This is our home; we live here. We care that White Flint be done right - a vibrant, dynamic community we can be part of, be proud of, and can continue to call home. Unfortunately, the current plan could as easily result in dense urban sprawl and little else but its inevitable crowding – of transit, traffic, and schools – and no sense of community. We see several areas where the plan should be improved to help create the White Flint we all want. Other WFCC members, representing their various constituent associations, are speaking to these issues and improvements in more detail throughout these two hearings. Their testimony is also included with this written statement.

First and foremost, the plan must acknowledge that infrastructure and development must balance. Maintaining our enviable quality of life depends on it. We chose to live in Montgomery County. Not Arlington. Not California. Not New York City. Not Toronto. We can look abroad for inspiration, but it's our County and our home - and the plan must address our needs and our quality of life. Montgomery County deserves a quality community in White Flint, and it will only happen if **adequate facilities balance the density of development.**

The entire Smart Growth initiative hangs on mixed use buildings near high quality transit, primarily Metro and BRT. The plan assumes Metro will be running 8 car trains every 2½ minutes, but as yet there is no such funding. Without high quality transit, people will drive. Not very smart. Before density and overcrowding overwhelm us all, **receipt of the required Metro cars and service must be a staging trigger.**

Arlington is routinely invoked as an example of successful urban design. However, the Orange line from Rosslyn to Ballston spaces 5 stations over 2 ½ miles. On the Red line, there is not another station within a mile of the WF metro station either way; that's a world of

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difference. Development in WF should not create an urban canyon with excessively long walks to metro. **Rather, the focus – the core density – should remain within ¼ mile of the Metro station.**

Adding 68,000 residents and workers to the sector – even if half walk to transit – will inevitably increase traffic around the sector considerably, as will the other new nearby development in the County. Hiding this increased congestion by degrading standards degrades our quality of life. The plan should acknowledge this impact on nearby neighborhoods. **Don't raise allowed congestion standards or exempt the sector from traffic impact analyses.** We don't let our children sweep things under the rug. Neither should we.

And our children deserve their place in the plan, too. It would be an unfortunate precedent to approve a sector plan without dedicating space for its needed elementary school, dedication included in every other plan in recent memory. Are we really going to build a landmark, walkable community, and then bus our kids out of it? Please **reserve space in the sector for the school they deserve.**

The highest density in the White Flint sector will have buildings towering up to 300 feet high right around the area for the Civic Green - yet this space is only 1 acre, or 0.2%, of the total sector area. Urban plazas and neighborhood greens would constitute another 5% of the sector. However, under this plan “urban plazas” could include outdoor restaurant seating in commercial development. There is no minimum size and there is no guarantee of public access. Neighborhood greens should be public spaces, but under this plan could be located on top of parking garages. As the original advisory committee did, **we request a larger Civic Green with a minimum of 2 acres** to be in balance with the building heights and density in the surrounding area, and keep public space public.

The planned density and additional congestion in White Flint will increase the total carbon emissions and pollutants in the sector, and the plan says storm water runoff will make streams worse. We have an opportunity to improve the water in Rock Creek and Cabin John. The plan should **require pollution assessments as part of any new development, and mandate dramatically better storm water management overall.**

While the draft plan states that all streets should have ample space for pedestrians, bicycles, and trees, the two newest streets in the new, multi-modal grid - Citadel Ave and Boylston St - have no bike lanes and only 4 foot wide sidewalks. We strongly support MoBike's testimony on the need for **more bike lanes and shared use paths.** We also strongly urge the Council to **designate the WF sector as a Bike Priority area** so that bike lanes and paths can be implemented immediately on existing roads that will not be redeveloped.

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What builds a community? It's not density; that just builds aggravation. It's all the little things that add quality to life: the arts, libraries, services for our citizens with needs. While the draft plan suggests some of these, the plan should **require an arts district, a full service library, a community center, a senior center, and child care facilities.**

And, finally, where does it end? The plan leaves an opening for dramatically more development under the guise of an implementation "Phase 4", whereby someone, using unspecified "alternative transportation analyses", would permit more density, and with no requirement that Phase 3 be completed first. The plan has made no effort to balance development with infrastructure in Phase 4. Also, White Flint will be a proving ground for lots of new, exciting ideas. Let's solve them rather than move the bar. **Limit the plan to implementation Phases 1,2, and 3.**

The Coalition is not opposed to building a new White Flint. Let's improve the plan so that we can build that vibrant and dynamic White Flint community we all want and we all can be proud to call our own.

Sincerely,

John King  
White Flint Community Coalition

cc: County Councilmembers

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